

No propaganda.  
No happy talk.  
Just what's going on, and why you should pay attention.

**Why Ecology News**

I've thought about putting out a newsletter for years, but never seemed to get to it. In recent months, however, so many things have been going on it seemed imperative to have a central point of information to keep everyone informed. Thus this newsletter. I intend to produce it once every two weeks. For future issues, you can send items to [tdemeo@fs.fed.us](mailto:tdemeo@fs.fed.us) for inclusion in the newsletter. They may be edited for clarity and brevity.

**Regional Existing Vegetation Mapping/Landscape Assessment**

**Background.** Conferences and discussions in wildlife, silviculture, fire management, and other disciplines have consistently indicated standardized and continually updated existing vegetation maps to be the number one data need in the Region. Over the past few years, national and regional standards for the mapping of existing vegetation have been developed within the Forest Service.

The next step in this development was to produce a strategy for mapping these standards consistently. To this end, a small team of Regional and Forest personnel developed this strategy over the past year or so. At the same time, Miles Hemstrom of the PNW lab was approached by the Oregon Department of Forestry to develop a landscape assessment for the state, as part of their ten-year planning process. As this developed, Miles began to think it would be good to involve other partners in the process, notably the Forest Service and BLM. We began to collaborate on this as a separate project related to the regional veg mapping strategy.

On June 15, 2005 Directors Cal Joyner and Lisa Freedman met with Miles and representatives from the existing veg mapping strategy. The decision was made to adopt Miles' landscape assessment project as the Regional method for attaining standardized existing vegetation maps at the mid-scale. An allowance for finer scale mapping using polygons was also accepted. We were further directed to include the state of Washington in the assessment. For FY06, no new funding was available, and we were directed to take funding out of existing programs to provide for this effort. That has been accomplished, and we are moving forward. (Contributions are usually in the form of people's time dedicated to the project; there are few exchanges of budget dollars.) In essence, Miles' landscape assessment and the Regional existing vegetation mapping strategy have been combined into a single effort. This was referred to until recently as

the Pacific Northwest Landscape Assessment (PNLA). This has now been changed to the Interagency Mapping and Assessment Project (IMAP).

### **IMAP Features**

1. Wall to wall coverage across the Region. Assessment summarized at fifth field watershed level.
2. Source for veg maps is LANDSAT data related to ground data (CVS/FIA grid) using a gradient nearest neighbor (GNN) technique.
3. Improving maps with local data is always encouraged. Maps generated with a Most Similar Neighbor (MSN) technique are acceptable for incorporation.
4. Polygon layer to provide for finer scale mapping will be generated using eCognition software. Polygons will be summarized using data from the GNN technique. These will be approximate and of limited use. Forests/Districts can decide to improve these polygons, however, with local data or by collecting new data.
5. Modeling method provides for approximation of historical vegetation as well as future scenarios predicted with VDDT.
6. Attributes mapped meet key business needs of wildlife, fire, and silviculture, and meet national and regional standards.

### **IMAP Guiding Principles**

1. Set reasonable goals and get them done.
2. Nail the key business needs, and avoid expanding the scope.
3. Forests are involved in doing the work and owning the product. Absolutely essential for success.
4. An inclusive, interagency process.....
5. ....but make decisions and move on. No six-month seminars.
6. Market and network to build ownership.
7. Standardized outputs, not standardized methods. Allow flexibility to incorporate new technologies in this rapidly evolving field.

### **IMAP FY06 Goals**

1. Complete 5<sup>th</sup> field assessments for NE Oregon.
2. Generate polygon layer for Fremont-Winema NF.
3. Begin VDDT models for SW Oregon.

### **Recent Developments**

1. Kickoff meeting was held October 20, 2005 in Portland. Those on the work teams attended. Background on the project was reviewed, and a spreadsheet to track each person's involvement and tasks was presented.
2. BLM has agreed in principle to serve as a partner for this effort. Their actual involvement in allocations of people and funding may come later. The chief reason for this is that FS and BLM plan revision cycles are not synchronized—FS

emphasis is currently the East side, and BLM the West side. BLM will contribute data now, however.

3. Bridge building efforts continue in Northeast Oregon. We had a conference call with Malheur staff recently. Miles Hemstron, Melinda Moeur, and Jim Merzenich will be visiting the Umatilla on Nov. 9.
4. The project is moving from the marketing/networking phase and into the production phase. Some marketing and networking is always necessary, of course, but from here on out there will be much more focus on the details of getting the work done.
5. Over the past couple of months we have become aware of The Nature Conservancy's ecoregional assessment effort. We have met with them twice and agree on continued collaboration. By a miracle of coincidence, they are using the same landscape boundaries (TEUI sections and 5<sup>th</sup> field watersheds) that we are. This will facilitate overlays, strengthening both efforts. TNC maps focus on rare species habitat and have an aquatic component. IMAP products will have the strength of future and historical vegetation assessments.
6. A VDDT training was held Oct 18-19 with the specific purpose of training those who will be working on the project.

### **Relation to Other Mapping**

1. IMAP is complementary, not competitive, with LANDFIRE. We will be using the same ecoregional boundaries and will crosswalk vegetation types. We plan on writing a Joint Fire Sciences grant proposal to examine these interrelationships in detail.
2. Coordinates with and mutually strengthens TNC's mapping.

### **Near Future Needs**

1. Nail down the ecoregional boundaries, since there are some subtle differences in recent versions of them. This is being done.
2. Agree on the final list of attributes, and affirm it meets national/regional standards.
3. Produce a letter, with Regional Forester and State Director signatures, formally announcing the project. This has been written in draft form and is being circulated for comment.

### **For More Information**

Visit us on the web at [www.reo.gov/ecoshare](http://www.reo.gov/ecoshare), click on "Existing Vegetation Mapping Strategy."

## **FRCC/LANDFIRE Update**

1. Last year we held 9 FRCC trainings in the Region. Implementation teams were established on the areas.
2. FRCC training is planned for the Colville NF, tentatively in March 2006.
3. A new version of the online FRCC training is now available. See [www.frcc.gov](http://www.frcc.gov) for details.
4. Trainings for implementation of LANDFIRE are now being developed by the national fire tech transfer team (DeMeo is a part-time member). In some ways these are similar to the national FRCC training and certification; in others they are quite different. An online training is being developed, with a beta version expected in November. The in-person, weeklong training is under development and scheduled to go operational in January 2006.

These trainings are more involved than FRCC and are heavily GIS-based. The target training audience is smaller than for FRCC. Participants must be GIS-skilled or attend with a GIS person. Note also, the training includes a number of related tools including FLAMMAP, an area change tool, and other products. It is not only a LANDFIRE training.

5. At the request of Miles Brown, BLM branch chief, I will be preparing a short presentation that outlines the relationship of LANDFIRE to IMAP and other mapping efforts.
6. Rapid assessment maps for R6 should be available within the next month.

## **Ecoshare/Publications**

1. Rapid assessment models for R6 are being posted to ecoshare. We ran into a glitch and were delayed a day or two.
2. We are beginning a program of selling our more popular publications. The purpose is to offset costs of republishing. Publications will be sold at BLM offices throughout Oregon and Washington. The first two documents on sale are:

Common Plants of the Inland Pacific Northwest	\$14 each
Alpine and Subalpine Vegetation of the Wallowa...	\$20 each